

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUDAPE 00219 231108Z

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ACTION TRSE-00

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SY-05 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

USSS-00 L-03 /028 W

----- 121301

R 230930Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5101

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

UNCLAS BUDAPEST 0219

PARIS FOR SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE, U.S. SECRET SERVICE

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: CFED

SUBJECO COUNTERFEIT U.S. CURRENCY IN HUNGARY

REF BUDAPEST 0212, 7 FAM 253

1. LOCAL BUDAPEST ENGLISH/GERMAN LANGUAGE DAILY NEWSPAPER REPORTED JANUARY 22 (REFTEL) THAT TWO BELGIANS WERE ARRESTED IN BUDAPEST IN POSSESSION OF COUNTERFEIT U.S. CURRENCY. THEY WERE: LEON HEUTS, AGE 47, AN ART DEALER, AND JACQUES SEPULCHRE, 40, A HOUSE PAINTER. PRESS REPORT STATED SERIAL NUMBERS OF FOUND BANKNOTES WERE ON AN INTERPOL-PUBLISHED LOOKOUT LIST.

2. HUNGARIAN TELEVISION CARRIED A BRIEF REPORT OF THE SAME INFORMATION EVENING JANUARY 21, BUT WITH SUBSIDIARY COMMENT THAT THE TWO BELGIANS MAY HAVE BEEN CONNECTED WITH A YUGOSLAV CITIZEN ARRESTED SOME TIME AGO IN HUNGARY FOR POSSESSION OF COUNTERFEIT U.S. CURRENCY. EMBASSY BELIEVES REFERENCE MIGHT BE TO EITHER THE STIPE VRDLJAK OR NIKOLA NUJOVIC CASES, ABOUT WHICH USSS PARIS IS ALREADY INFORMED.

3. EMBASSY CONSULAR SECTION CHIEF CALLED ON BELGIAN CONSUL BUDAPEST AFTERNOON JANUARY 22 TO DISCUSS CASE. BELGIAN ADVISED THAT THE TWO HAD BEEN ARRESTED NOVEMBER 18 IN BUDAPEST, AFTER HAVING COME TO HUNGARY AROUND NOVEMBER 11 ON AN APPARENT VACATION
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TRIP. ACCORDING TO HUNGARIAN DIPLOMATIC NOTE OF DECEMBER 2 INFORMING BELGIANS OF ARRESTS, ONE MAN HAD 9 COUNTERFEIT \$100

BILLS AND 19 COUNTERFEIT \$50 BILLS IN HIS POSSESSION OR IN HOTEL ROOM; THE OTHER HAD 122 COUNTERFEIT \$50 BILLS. THE NOTE STATED THAT BANKNOTE SERIAL NUMBERS WERE ON AN INTERPOL-PUBLISHED LIST, BUT DID NOT RECITE THE NUMBERS. BELGIAN CONSUL HAS VISITED THE TWO SEPARATELY IN PRISON, BUT WAS NOT PERMITTED TO DISCUSS CHARGES WITH THEM. HE SAID HE HAD IMPRESSION THAT ALL OR MOST OF THE COUNTERFEITS BELONGED TO ONLY ONE OF THE TWO, AND THAT THE OTHER WAS A RELATIVELY INNOCENT VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCES HAVING JOINED THE FIRST MAN AS A MORE-OR-LESS CASUAL TRAVELING COMPANION.

4. BELGIAN CONSUL UNDERSTANDS TRIAL WOULD BE ABOUT THE END OF JANUARY. CHARGES WILL LIKELY INVOLVE IMPORTATION, POSSESSION, AND PUTTING INTO CIRCULATION OF COUNTERFEIT CURRENCY.

5. BELGIAN STATED THAT AT TIME OF ARREST OF THESE TWO INDIVIDUALS, BELGIAN NEWSPAPERS REPORTED A MAJOR ROUND OF COUNTERFEITING ARRESTS IN BELGIUM WHICH, HE OPINED, MIGHT HAVE SOME CONNECTION. BELGIAN INFORMED THAT SEPULCHRE WAS BORN IN LIEGE JUNE 14, 1936, AND HAS RESIDENCE AT AMBOURG (NEAR LIEGE); HEUTS WAS BORN PARIS JANUARY 8, 1927, AND HAS RESIDENCE AT LIEGE.

6. OF SOME INTEREST MAY BE FACT THAT IN MID-NOVEMBER, AT ABOUT THE TIME OF ARREST, BELGIAN CONSUL RECEIVED A WELFARE/WHEREABOUTS INQUIRY FROM BELGIUM ABOUT ONE OR BOTH INDICATING THAT RELATIVES WERE WORRIED ABOUT LACK OF CONTACT AND THAT THEY "MAY HAVE BEEN ARRESTED IN HUNGARY." THE INQUIRY DID NOT INDICATE THE POSSIBLE GROUNDS FOR SUCH AN ARREST.

7. IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFERENCE FAM, EMBASSY WILL REQUEST HUNGARIAN MFA TO FURNISH US COPIES, PHOTOCOPIES, OR DESCRIPTIONS OF AT LEAST SOME OF THE BANKNOTES IN QUESTION. FYI: IF HUNGARIANS FOLLOW THEIR PAST PRACTICE IN SUCH CASES, IT IS UNLIKELY THEY WILL FURNISH SUCH INFORMATION UNTIL JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS ARE CONCLUDED, PERHAPS SEVERAL MONTHS FROM NOW.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BUDAPE00219
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760027-0227
From: BUDAPEST
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760129/aaaaazbu.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION TRSE
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 BUDAPEST 212
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: hattaycs
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 JUN 2004 by schwenja>; APPROVED <12 AUG 2004 by hattaycs>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CO COUNTERFEIT U.S. CURRENCY IN HUNGARY
TAGS: CFED
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006